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FEB 10 2005

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of :
Yingjian Chen :
Application No. 10/617,015 :
Filed: July 10, 2003 : ON PETITION
Title of Invention: :
NANOTUBE SPIN VALVE AND :
METHOD OF PRODUCING THE SAME :

This is a decision on the Petition for Revival of an Application Abandoned Unavoidably Under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed December 2, 2004, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is dismissed.

Any further petition to revive the above-identified application (under 37 CFR 1.137(a)), must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Request for Reconsideration of Petition under 37 CFR 1.137", and be addressed to Petitions Attorney Derek L. Woods. This is **not** final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

Background

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to timely and properly reply Notice to File Missing Parts of Nonprovisional Application, mailed October 8, 2003. The Notice set a two (2) month period for reply. No reply having been received, the application became abandoned December 9, 2003. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed November 23, 2004.

Applicant's Response

In response to the Notice, Applicant files the instant petition and asserts that the delay in responding to the Notice was to allow time for the inventor "to seek legal advice in order to

fully understand the legal ramification of this patent application before any further action was taken." The Applicant states that "[i]t has taken longer than anticipated by the inventor, and certainly longer than the TWO month set forth in the initial office action." *Petition* at p.3.

A Grantable Petition Under 37 CFR 1.137(a)

A grantable petition to revive an abandoned application under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply (unless previously filed), which may met by the filing of a notice of appeal and the requisite fee; a continuing application; an amendment or request for reconsideration which *prima facie* places the application in condition for allowance, or a first or second submission under 37 CFR 1.129(a) if the application has been pending for at least two years as of June 8, 1995, taking into account any reference made in such application to any earlier filed application under 35 USC 120, 121 and 365(c); (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(1); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(a) was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(c).

Applicant lacks item (3) as set forth above.

Applicable Law

The general standard applied by the Office requires petitioner to establish that petitioner treated the patent the same as a reasonable and prudent person would treat his or her most important business.¹ 35 U.S.C. 41(c)(1) states, "The Commissioner may accept the payment of any maintenance fee ... at any time ... if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been unavoidable." (emphasis added). "In the specialized field of patent law, ... the Commissioner of Patent and Trademarks is primarily responsible for the application and enforcement of the various narrow and technical statutory and regulatory provisions. His interpretation of those provisions is entitled to considerable deference." Rydeen

¹ The Commissioner is responsible for determining the standard for unavoidable delay and for applying that standard.

v. Quigg, 748 F.Supp. 900, 904, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA)1876 (D.D.C. 1990), aff'd without opinion (Rule 36), 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir. 1991) (citing Morganroth v. Quigg, 885 F.2d 843, 848, 12 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1989); Ethicon, Inc. v. Quigg, 849 F.2d 1422, 1425, 7 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1152 (Fed. Cir. 1988) ("an agency' interpretation of a statute it administers is entitled to deference"); see also Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc., 467 U.S. 837, 844, 81 L. Ed. 694, 104 S. Ct. 2778 (1984) ("if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the agency's answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute.")).

"The critical phrase 'unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable' has remained unchanged since first enacted in 1861." Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (D.C. Cir. 1982). The standard for "unavoidable" delay for reinstating a patent is the same as the unavoidable standard for reviving an application. See Ray v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 608-609, 34 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1786, 1787 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (citing In re patent No. 4,409,763, 7 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1798, 1800 (Comm'r Pat. 1990; Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (D.C. Cir. 1982)). The court in In re Mattullath, accepted the standard which had been proposed by Commissioner Hall which "requires no more or greater care or diligence than is generally used and observed by prudent and careful men in relation to their most important business." In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-515 (1912) (quoting Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)). However, "The question of whether an applicant's delay in prosecuting an application was unavoidable [will] be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking all of the facts and circumstances into account."² Nonawareness of the content of, or a misunderstanding of, PTO statutes, PTO rules, the MPEP, or Official Gazette notices, does not constitute unavoidable delay.³ The statute requires a "showing"

² Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (1982).

³ See Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (Fed. Cir. 1982) (citing Potter v. Dann, 201 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 574 (D. D.C. 1978) for the proposition that counsel's nonawareness of PTO rules does not constitute "unavoidable" delay)); Vincent v. Mossinghoff, 1985 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 23119, 13, 230 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 621 (D. D.C. 1985) (Plaintiffs, through their counsel's actions, **or their own**, must be held responsible for having noted the MPEP section and Official Gazette notices expressly stating that the

by petitioner. Therefore, petitioner has the burden of proof. The decision will be based solely on the written, administrative record in existence. It is not enough that the delay was unavoidable; petitioner must prove that the delay was unavoidable. A petition will not be granted if petitioner provides insufficient evidence to "show" that the delay was unavoidable.

Applicant is further advised that the Patent and Trademark Office must rely on the actions or inactions of duly authorized and voluntarily chosen representatives of the applicant, and applicant is bound by the consequences of those actions or inactions. Link v. Wabash, 370 U.S. 626, 633-34 (1962); Huston v. Ladner, 973 F.2d 1564, 1567, 23 USPQ2d 1910, 1913 (Fed. Cir. 1992); see also Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 317, 5 USPQ2d 1130, 1132 (D.N. Ind. 1987). Specifically, petitioner's delay caused by the actions or inactions of his voluntarily chosen representative does not constitute unavoidable delay within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. 133 or 37 CFR 1.137(a). Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 5 USPQ2d 1130 (D. Ind. 1987); Smith v. Diamond, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); Potter v. Dann, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); Ex parte Murray, 1891 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 130, 131 (Comm'r Pat. 1891). In re Mattullath, 38 App. D.C. 497, 514-15 (1912) (quoting Ex parte Pratt, 1887 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 31, 32-33 (1887)); see also Winkler v. Ladd, 221 F. Supp. 550, 552, 138 USPQ 666, 167-68 (D.D.C. 1963), aff'd, 143 USPQ 172 (D.C. Cir. 1963); Ex parte Henrich, 1913 Dec. Comm'r Pat. 139, 141 (1913).

Finally, a "delay (in responding) resulting from the lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice, or MPEP, [] does not constitute unavoidable delay." MPEP 711.03(c).

Applicant's Assertion

Applicant asserts that the delay was to allow time for the inventor "to seek legal advice in order to fully understand the legal ramification of this patent application before any further action was taken."

certified mailing procedures outlined in 37 CFR 1.8(a) do not apply to continuation applications.) (Emphasis added).

Analysis and Conclusion

As to item (3), Applicant has not provided an adequate showing of unavoidable delay. The general standard applied by the Office requires petitioner to establish that petitioner treated the patent the same as a reasonable and prudent person would treat his or her most important business. It is the conclusion of this Office that a reasonable and prudent person, in relation to their most important business, would timely prosecute the application to avoid abandonment. Here, Applicant sought legal advice, which apparently precluded Applicant from prosecuting the application. Thus Applicant chose, as his most important business, to seek legal advice to the exclusion of prosecuting his application.

Moreover, Applicant has failed to account for the entire delay from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition. Applicant merely states that the delay was to allow time for the inventor "to seek legal advice in order to fully understand the legal ramification of this patent application before any further action was taken." Applicant fails to account for the period from when the reply was due; December 8, 2003, until the filing of this petition. Applicant merely provides that it took longer than anticipated, and certainly longer than two months.

Alternative venue

Applicant is strongly urged to file a petition stating that the delay was unintentional. Public Law 97-247, § 3, 96 Stat. 317 (1982), which revised patent and trademark fees, amended 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) to provide for the revival of an "unintentionally" abandoned application without a showing that the delay in was "unavoidable." An "unintentional" petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the required fee, currently \$750.00.

The filing of a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) cannot be intentionally delayed and therefore must be filed promptly. A person seeking revival due to unintentional delay can not make a statement that the delay was unintentional unless the entire delay, including the delay from the date it was discovered that the application was abandoned until the filing of the petition to revive under 37 CFR 1.137(b), was unintentional. A statement

that the delay was unintentional is not appropriate if petitioner intentionally delayed the filing of a petition for revive under 37 CFR 1.137(b).

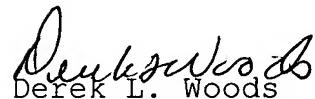
Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Commissioner for Patents
PO Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By FAX: (703) 872-9306
Attn: Office of Petitions

By hand: Customer Service Window
Randolph Building
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Telephone inquiries concerning this matter should be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3232.


Derek L. Woods
Attorney/Advisor
Office of Petitions